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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ACCRA 000623

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SUBJECT: FORMER TRADE MINISTER PREDICTS 2008 PRESIDENTIAL
VICTORY WILL BE GREAT CHALLENGE FOR NPP

REF: A. ACCRA 618

[1](#)B. ACCRA 612

[1](#)C. ACCRA 605

Classified By: AMBASSADOR PAMELA E. BRIDGEWATER FOR REASON 1.5 (B) AND
(D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The former Minister of Trade and leading candidate for the New Patriotic Party presidential nomination Alan Kyerematen discussed a wide range of topics during lunch at my residence on May 9. Alan Kyerematen fought a hard, strong battle, coming in second against 17 NPP candidates, many of whom were his former colleague Ministers. He lost narrowly to Nana Akufo-Addo in the NPP's December 2007 party congress. Alan Kyerematen had canvassed on a more populist agenda than usual for the NPP, promising to create more jobs and wealth for the majority of Ghanaian citizens. He was commonly referred to as "Cash K," as there were reports that he was doling out "envelopes" far and wide. It was an open secret that Kyerematen was President Kufuor's preferred choice. In late April Alan Kyerematen resigned from the NPP claiming that procedures during the congress and nominating process were incorrect. There were reports of his return, and subsequent rejection of these reports before Kyerematen finally confirmed that he "was back." The return of Alan Kyerematen followed a series of meetings and brokered discussions with high level party operatives, and included a meeting with Kufuor and Akufo-Addo. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Alan Kyerematen smiled broadly when the topic of his resignation surfaced. Kyerematen said simply that "important procedures" had not been handled properly during the party's congress and that he felt these matters had to be settled soon and thoroughly if the party was to maximize its chances to guarantee victory in the presidential and legislative election set for December 2008. Kyerematen said it is "extremely difficult" (but not impossible) for a party that has served two back-to-back terms in power to be re-elected easily. It is simply a factor of the voting population wanting to "give another party a chance to govern." He admitted also that for all its success, international accolades, positive economic indicators, and gains, sovereign credit ratings, etc. and other accomplishments, the NPP had "not sufficiently met the needs of everyday Ghanaians." That, he said, would be his party's greatest challenge: to convince Ghanaians in the villages and regions to vote the NPP back into power.

[1](#)3. (C) Flag bearer Akufo-Addo must work diligently to "soften" his image and appear more genuinely people-oriented, Kyerematen averred. He said that a conservative party like the NPP would be even more challenged at this period because of the worldwide economic crises, rising food and oil prices, and the hardship faced by less advantaged Ghanaians in purchasing basic food stuffs and other essential commodities.

Kyerematen indicated that he is working with Akufo-Addo to forge strategies that the electorate will perceive to be more "people friendly." He said that the NDC's launch on last Thursday had been a huge, lively turnout - larger than in recent memory. The choice of John Mahama, a Member of Parliament respected across party and geographic lines was a "brilliant" strategic move on the part of NDC presidential candidate Atta Mills, Kyerematen added. The NPP thus must craft its campaign launch carefully to show its strength and project a positive message of hope. He said he would be fully on board to lend his charismatic personality to the party's campaign. He also said that the door-to-door strategy of Atta Mills was a good strategy (he had said this earlier while still a candidate), and thought the NPP should engage in similar people-to-people outreach throughout the country. Ghana's population needs to know that candidates want to meet with and hear their concerns consistently, and not just during campaign times to hand out tee shirts and bags of rice.

14. (C) Turning to external topics, Ghana, like other countries, has come under the "spell of China." Kyerematen believes that China has a master, long-term plan to ensure that it has the oil and other resources such as timber and natural resources for its billions of people. He criticized Ghana for accepting soft loans without analyzing thoroughly enough the consequences and "fine print." Developing as well as developed countries "must keep their eye on China," because the negative impact and implications of some of China's engagement policies will be felt in Africa and elsewhere quicker than people realize. Leaders in Africa have got to get a firmer grip on the reality of rapid and large scale engagement with China to ensure they retain

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integrity and security of their products, brands, infrastructure projects and intellectual property, Kyerematen warned.

15. (U) We discussed at length the need to "brand" Kente cloth and only being able to refer to a product as "Kente" with its intricate, unique patterns, if the product or cloth is made in Ghana. Kyerematen said he recognized this, and would work with the current Minister of Trade Joe Baidoo-Ansah to "really get moving" on protecting the intellectual property of Ghanaian Kente. Before we know it, "genuine" Kente will have a 'Made in China' label. (NOTE: The GoG Golden Jubilee Organizing Committee was criticized for purchasing printed Kente patterned fabric for its official Ghana @50 signature cloth. END NOTE.)

16. (SBU) Alan Kyerematen said that relations with the U.S. were better than ever, with the two presidents of Ghana and the U.S. enjoying unprecedented numbers of meetings, sharing a personal affinity and warm personal relationship. In response to his question about a changed U.S. presidency (whether party or individual), I told Kyerematen that I believed our bilateral relations would remain strong, and that the next U.S. administration would reinforce outreach and positive interaction between our two countries. I added that our relationship is primed to continue to grow from strength to strength, adding that whoever wins in the U.S. presidential election would undoubtedly continue to value and support the bilateral relationship between our countries and work to continue consolidating Ghana's democracy and economic progress.

17. (C) COMMENT: Alan Kyerematen - The former Ambassador to the U.S. was his charismatic upbeat self, exuding his trademark warm persona and openness. Behind the exterior, however, there was clearly disappointment not just in his loss of the nomination, but in "lost" opportunities for the NPP during the last eight years. While he pledged full support for his party and its candidate, the "heart" did not seem to be where his words were. Alan Kyerematen will have his work cut out to get his supporters to put the same energy

into support for Nana Akufo-Addo. We think Kyerematen will do the necessary but like nearly all other interlocutors, no one predicts a first round victory for either major party.

END COMMENT.

BRIDGEWATER